Wallenberg File

SECRET

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P&S
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13 December 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: FI/ECA/WE

ATTN : [redacted]

SUBJECT : Erwin C. OLSEN

1. Reference is made to conversations between [redacted] and the writer on the question of querying Subject regarding his connection with Raoul WALLENBERG. Following notification by [redacted] that the Security Office had indicated that it had no objection to the writer's interviewing Subject, Subject was telephoned at his office and a meeting was arranged for 1 December 1955.

2. Subject is the Washington representative for the New York investment counselling firm of Trigg and Company; his office is located at 815 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

3. At the meeting with Subject on 1 December 1955, our interest in Raoul WALLENBERG was explained to Subject and he was told that we were turning to him for assistance in clearing up a question to which there appeared to be no answer in our files or that of any of our predecessor organizations. Subject indicated his understanding of our interest and his complete willingness to assist.

4. The writer sketched briefly our knowledge of Subject's connection with WALLENBERG, basing this largely on information contained in Raoul Wallenberg - Jews in Budapest, a book in Swedish by Jenö Lévai, published in Stockholm in 1948. Subject confirmed the facts, as they pertain to his relationship with WALLENBERG, related in this book. Subject was then asked whether he had at any time had any operational contact with, or made any operational use of, WALLENBERG. Subject replied to both questions with a very firm negative. Subject went on to explain that during his assignment in Stockholm during World War II, he actually worked for three U.S. Government agencies: the Treasury Department, in which capacity he acted as Financial Attache of the American Legation in Stockholm; the War Refugee Board, of which he was the Stockholm representative; and OSS. In the case of OSS, Subject in effect wore three different hats: financial, handling all the finances and accounts of the OSS mission in Stockholm; X-2, intercepting refugees and escapees to Sweden; and SI, procuring intelligence, including dispatching of agents to Norway and to the Baltic area.

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5. Subject's contact with WALLENBERG was only in his capacity as representative of the War Refugee Board. Subject was extremely explicit on this point and returned to it on several occasions during the course of the meeting, apparently wishing to insure that there was no misunderstanding on this score. As had been indicated in the book cited above, Subject was instrumental in the selection of WALLENBERG for the mission to Budapest. Following WALLENBERG's assignment to the Swedish Legation in Budapest, WALLENBERG was supplied by Subject with funds solely for the purpose of assisting Jews in Hungary.

6. In explaining the mechanics of funding WALLENBERG in Budapest, Subject said that an account had been opened by the JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE (JDC) in the Stockholms Enskilda Bank, Stockholm. The funds in this account were earmarked for WALLENBERG and Subject was authorized to draw on this account. Whenever WALLENBERG indicated, through means of letters pouched from Budapest to the Foreign Office in Stockholm, that he needed funds, Subject withdrew the necessary funds from the account referred to above and would send them to WALLENBERG through Swedish Foreign Office channels. Subject stated that, except for 10,000 Swedish kroner which were given to WALLENBERG from the President's secret fund (1) all funds given to WALLENBERG were from the account referred to above and all funds given to him were solely for use in connection with refugee work.

7. Following WALLENBERG's disappearance in Budapest, the balance remaining in the account at that time, which according to Subject was fairly considerable, was withdrawn from the account, the account closed and the money returned to the JDC. Subject added that, should any further details or corroboration of the above be desired, he was certain that Mr. Moses Leavitt, Executive Vice-President of the JDC, would be able to supply the desired information. Subject also said that a 3 Volume TOP SECRET report on War Refugee Board Activities in Sweden contained all the documentary evidence on Subject's dealings with WALLENBERG; according to Subject, this Agency and the Department of State each hold a copy of this report.

8. In reply to the writer's question, Subject indicated his willingness to discuss this matter further if desired and to answer any questions which the Department of State or the Agency might wish to pose.

[redacted]

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